NESQLUG NEWS

The Journal of Record of
New England Sinclair QL User Group
Vol III, No 6
"A Beacon to Guide the Wandering Sojourner Home from the Abyss of Confusion"

EDITOR'S NOTES

A major event occurred at the last meeting at Al Boehm's house. Will Horton will take over as editor commencing with the next newsletter.

Will has many plans for the newsletter, including a new format. The dire warnings last time are now inoperative!

It was hoped that a sampling of the new format would be included in this issue, but Judy had a baby daughter and Will is a bit busy.

Will, that excuse is good only once a year!

So if you have not renewed already, this is your last issue. Renew or miss out on a fresh new approach to the NESQLUG NEWS.

Elsewhere in this issue is big news about Miracle's new QLX card and its North American debut in June at Newport, RI. Details follow.

Many thanks to contributors Sherm Waterman, Eric Norton and Hugh Howie.

RENEWAL TIME

This is the last issue of volume III. Membership dues (for the family) are ten ($10.00) in North America, fifteen ($15.00) in the rest of the world. Send it to Sherm Waterman at the address below.

NOTE!NOTE!NOTE!

The May meeting is the traditional time for electing new board members. **Can you help?**

The NESQLUG NEWS is the Journal of the New England Sinclair QL User Group. It is published bi-monthly.

Annual membership is $10.00 (students $5.00) in North America. The rest of the world - $15.00 air mail.

We meet monthly on the first Saturday of odd-numbered months and the first Sunday of even numbered months. If that's a holiday weekend, we meet the following weekend.

NEXT MEETING

NESQLUG meets from 11:00 pm to 4:00 pm, Saturday, May 1, at the home of Al and Dorothy Boehm, 33 Selfridge Rd., Bedford MA 01730 Phone (617) 275-1097 for directions.

There has not been scheduled a Special Interest meeting for June. However, since the QLX card is being introduced on June 5, at Newport, that qualifies as 'of Special Interest!'

Our exchange policy is simple: we-send-you-ours-if-you-send-us-yours (WSYOIYSUY) and you have something to say about the QL.

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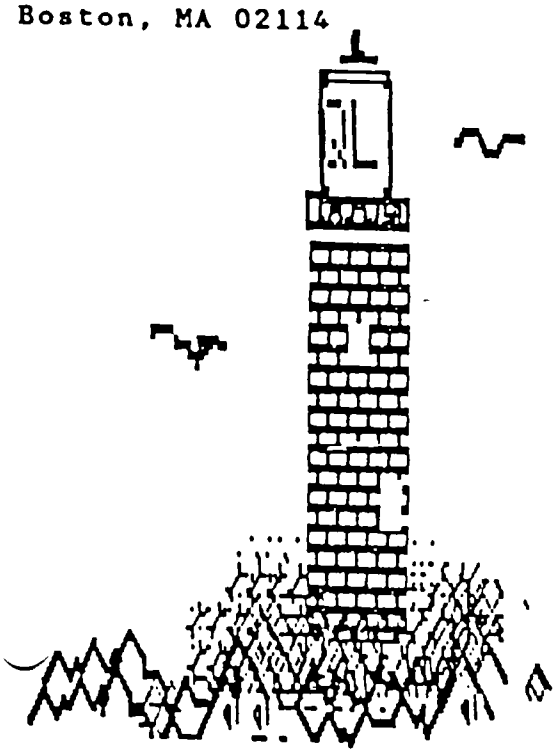

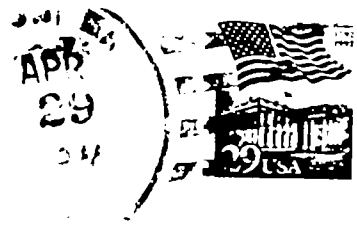

FIRST CLASS MAIL

To:

To: TIMES NEWS CATUG NITE- 80
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QLX ARRIVES

by Peter Hale

The recent announcement of Miracle Systems QLX card for the IBM has caused a great flurry of interest both here and in Europe.

Stuart Honeyball of Miracles is expected to be at Newport, RI, on June 5 to demonstrate it to a projected audience of 150 people.

We may have to wait for confirmation at that time, but this is what the QLX appears to be.

First, the technical:

1. A Motorola 68040 25 mHz processor.
2. A legal rewrite of the QDOS operating system that does not infringe of Amstrad's copyright.
3. A choice of 1, 2, 4, or 8 Meg of onboard memory, with slots for upgrading in 1 Meg units to a full 8 Meg.
4. It plugs into either an XT (8 bit) or AT (16 bit) slot of an MS-DOS computer, utilizing all of that computer's devices (monitor, drives, keypord, serial and parallel ports, etc.

That said there is a lot of confusion as to the mechanics of the QLZ card viz a viz the MS-DOS computer.

An MS-DOS computer comes with a motherboard - the basic computer and expansion slots, usually at least 4, often 6. In the world of MS-DOS these slots are utilized for such add-ons as mouse ports, fax boards, modems, memory, etc. They are generally called XT or AT slots, depending on whether they have 8 bit or 16 bit busses to the motherboard.

QL's have only two slots, but that is partly because video out and serial ports are built in.

One slot is the Eprom slot at the rear used for such firmware as TK2, ICE, etc. The other is the biggy on the left where the memory expansion and drive interface is inserted.

Essentially, the QLX card is a board that gives the IBM devices (monitor, drives, keyboard, etc.) access to a whole other computer - the QL.

It appears that the performance of the QLX card is totally independent of the MS-DOS computer into which it is installed. The only caveat that we know of is that the monitor must be at least VGA color.

The board has its own memory. It does not need or use any of the MS-DOS memory. Theoretically, one could multi-task MS-DOS and QDOS and also multi-task within QDOS. In QL mode, all familiar QDOS functions are presumably available - multi-tasking, SuperBASIC, etc.

The use of the drives is fairly simple. QL's use MS-DOS compatible floppy drives anyway. An MS-DOS disk in the drive makes it an MS-DOS drive; a QL disk makes it a QL drive. The hard disk merely needs to be partitioned to have part in MS-DOS and part in QDOS.

One way of looking at the QLX is that you get a piece of hardware (the board) that lets virtually any MS-DOS computer be a box for a full blown, state-of-the-art QL.

At this writing, the price of the QLX card has not been released, but speculation puts the price at $700 to $800.

OK, that's a lot of money for a QL even with 8 Megs of memory, true 32 bit bus processor, and a host of

other features. You still need the MS-DOS computer.

In the Greater Boston area a rebuilt 286 with a 40 meg drive and VGA color monitor can be had for about $400.

Thus the total outlay would be $1100 to $1200 or about the price for an entry level 25 Meg 486SX clone with a Super VGA monitor and some scuzzy software.

Another way of comparing price is that the same money only gets you three (3) decent application programs for the MS-DOS computer. In the meantime you get to keep all your favorite QL software.

Expensive?

Yes, particularly for those who started computing in the 80's with a ZX-81 kit and the family's B+W TV.

On the otherhand, anyone leaving the QL to MS-DOS land faces the same bill, and no one says you have to buy the QLX card if you are happy with what you've got.

If not happy and planning to go MS-DOS, it is the perfect transition hardware and is so fast you may not go any further.

WHAT'S HAPPENING?

by Hugh H. Howie

At one time when I was in business, I often did not speak out when I should have, as there was always someone ready to "get back" at me in one form or another. Now I am retired and enjoying life immensely, I can speak out when I think I perceive an injustice. That is a great feeling.

Since receiving the January issue of the NESQLUG newsletter, I would like to ask what is going on?

I read on the first page that the editor has nothing to put into the newsletter. I also see empty spaces which the editor has not been able to fill because no one has sent anything in.

The second page has some information on the latest meeting of the club.

The third (and last) page I will get to later.

What is going on?

One of the purposes of a newsletter is intended to be to supply the members of the club with information concerning the club, and also what is going on in the sphere of activities and interests of the club, and to keep those who are unable to attend the meetings because of distance or other problems, up to date with those developments and activities within the club.

Is there NOTHING to report? Surely someone somewhere has something to say about something?

The January newsletter was an absolute disgrace. Nothing except to say there was nothing to report.

The most revealing statement was on page 3, where it was published that EMSoft was giving up business. The statement says that "the decision to terminate operations was not arrived at impulsively but was hastened by 'mean and petty rumour mongering without basis in fact'".

To my mind this was obviously an allusion to a certain advertisement appearing in the newsletter; an advert I was always happy to see. I may not buy anything because of that advert, but at least I know what is available. That is important to me. When I decide I would like a certain product I will at least know what it costs and where to get it. That is also important to me.

Here are some of the things I want to read about in a newsletter:

What other people are doing.
What is going on pertaining to that organisation.
What new things and products are coming onto the market.
How much do those things cost?
How they are being received.
How good are they?
Are other people having the same problems I am having?
What other people are doing 'for kicks'
What do I do about this? That? Or the next?

That is just a small sample of what I want, and if I can't get it one place I am going to try another and still another, till I get some semblance of my wants.

The fact that you are reading this is almost proof that you are a member of the club; that you want to hear the experiences of others. Don't you think that others want to hear about YOUR experiences?

Have you NEVER needed help or assistance? Who did you turn to? A club member?

Is that why you are a member? To receive and not to GIVE?

I know from my own learning processes that I relied heavily (and I still do) on being able to ask a fellow member for the benefit of his expertise and experiences. Because of that I feel that I should pass on to other readers what I have learned. So that - we all may progress to better things.

Another thing I like to read in newsletters is what is new and appealing for my machine. Without that information without reading of the value of a program to others without the passage of information how am I make that YOU how are WE to find out what is going on in our own little world?

Let it be clearly understood that advertising serves two different purposes. It tells YOU that someone has something to sell. But take another look at that statement it also tells YOU that SOMETHING IS AVAILABLE!!! Without the knowledge that something is AVAILABLE, would you want to spend your money on it? I guess not as you would not know it was there unless some other person told you. And just who might that be? Why another person with the same interests as your own in other words a fellow member of your club or group!!! Or heaven forbid the purveyor!!!

Remember, your newsletter is a form of advertisement for your CLUB or ORGANISATION.

I appeal to all, make this newsletter something we can all be proud of, and if this means we have to work together, is that such a bad thing? Let us put pen to paper and write something. The fact that things are being said is indicative that someone has something to say so let's write/say something of constructive nature for a change; let's not whisper out the side of our mouths petty little things that damage other people in any way.

Finally, from experience I well know the satisfaction of seeing something I wrote being published, and perhaps even being commented on by the reader, that is the ultimate.

Hugh H. Howie.

P.S. If you have anything to say about this or me, please be sure and spell my name right.

MEETING MINUTES

by Eric Norton

On March 6, 1993, Al Boehm demonstrated a program that shows a spinning Jupiter.

I demonstrated several programs from disk IFE C002. They were Starburst, Cavern Frenzy, Runway and Surround. Starburst and Cavern Frenzy are maze games; Surround is another maze game, but

it needs a little more thought; and Runway is a game where you use bombs from your plane to destroy little "blocks" blocking the runway. If you succeed, you will go to the next level. If you don't, you blow-up!

Unfortunately, Sherm Waterman wasn't there because he is vacationing in Florida. Lucky guy!!!

Gary Norton demonstrated QL WAR from IPE COO5, a war simulation game for the QL.

I also demonstrated ISLA, from IPE COO2, a game of running through a jungle trying to avoid deadly hazards. The game features excellent graphics.

In the business meeting, Al Boehm suggested putting articles and games on disk/microdrive instead of printed form. The idea is for the receiver to return the disk with additional articles and/or disks. (The editor and Al would like to hear how others feel about this idea.)

Peter Hale suggested that we put all of our efforts into publishing one annual issue of the NESQLUG newsletter. At the current rate we receive only enough material for one issue.

There was criticism of the editorial in the March/April issue where the Editor's Notes said that we may be getting just a postcard about what's going on at NESQLUG. The group consensus was that this was far too restrictive a policy and that newsletters would be open to publishing any articles/programs that were submitted.

Discussion revolved around a new format, and Will Horton has offered to take on the editorial chores commencing with the July/August issue.

PRAIRIE DIGITAL
by Peter Hale

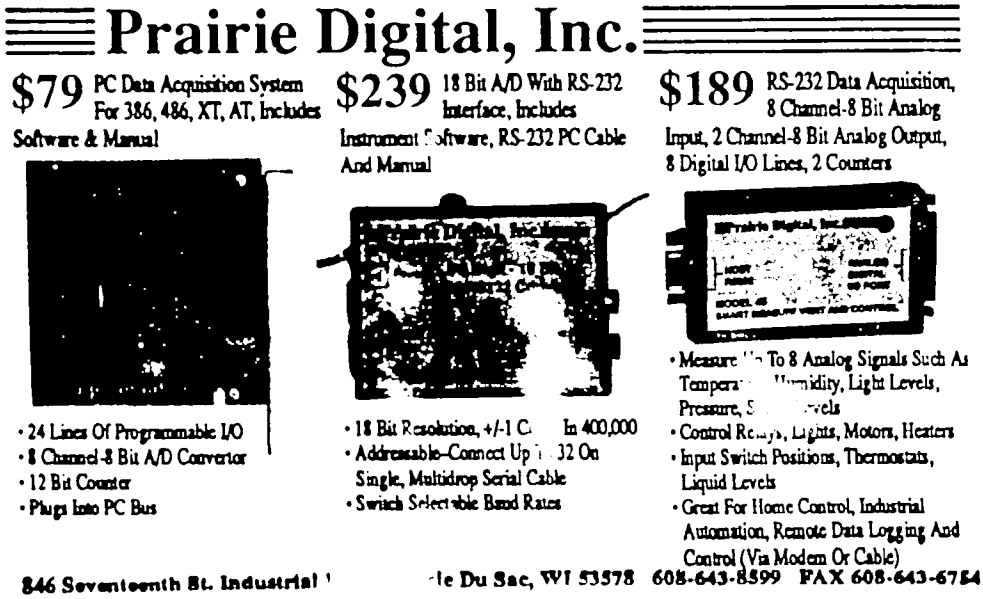
Some years ago a firm called Prairie Digital marketed a A/D I/O board for the QL.

Such a board lets the computer control electrically operated devices and/or read data about the position of electrically operated devices.

A demonstration of this boad was given by Mike Mitchell at a meeting several years ago. The QL controlled a servo motor.

Recently, I saw an advert, copied below, reporting that Prairie Digital was still in business, making A/D I/O boards for MS-DOS computers.

What is interesting is that the prices are very competitive.



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SWEQL

1993-03-14

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Dear fellow QL users,

The Swedish QL Group's annual general meeting has asked me, the signer, to write this letter to you.

As a "new deal" in the swedish club, when planning activities, we try to arrange at least two yearly events (apart from the monthly meetings at the Swedish QL Group in Gothenburg and at QLIN in Linköping).

One event is to visit another QL-meeting somewhere in the northern/ western part of Europe, and the other one is to have a national QL-meeting.

There are some problems when it comes to the international area. Our problems, when planning, can be described in this way:

* We use to get the information about activities far too late! The information from our fellow QL organisations reaches us seldom more than two-three weeks before the event. In some cases even after the event already has taken place.

* As Sweden has no landcontact with Germany, Holland, Belgium or Great Britain we must go by sea or air. The companies that run ferrylines demand a booking at least three weeks before departure (if special accomodations are asked for).

* Our internal newsletter, QL Bladet, issues about 5 times a year. To enable us to inform and invite our members, who are scattered all over Sweden, and to get an answere back, we need some extra time, approx. 5-6 weeks.

Of course, there are many ways to get around these problems and we would like to have Your help with the following:

Could you - ask your undergroups to make a rough planning at least six months ahead

- send invitations and all possible information to the different international contacts, say twice a year (mid April and October???)

This in order to give all subgroups a fair chance to:

* inform their members
* make all ferry- and airline reservations
* make other necessary plannings

With all respect
SVENSKA QL GRUPPEN

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Burlington. Ont. L7T 3V3
(416) 634 4929
1993 Apr 12

I would like to express my thanks to New England Sinclair Users Group for the lovely card and sentiments of sympathy expressed on the recent passing of Jessie.

Her illness was so sudden, without warning, it is hard to believe it has happened, but it has.....

Jessie had many happy memories of the recent visitation of NESQLUG to our home last year, and also of our trip to New Hampshire where we had such a relaxing time. She did enjoy meeting all those wonderful folks.

It is nice to know that in times like those I have friends of sympathy in many places, and in particular in New England and in NESQLUG.

Many thanks to all for your kind thoughts.

Hugh H Howie

MIRACLE IN NEWPORT '93

On June 5th, IQLR will be sponsoring an exciting QL symposium in Newport, RI.

Place: Salvation Army Building
51 Memorial Blvd.
Newport, RI
Time: 1PM to 6PM

Several of our English QLers will be in attendance to demonstrate new hardware and software. These will include Stuart Honeyball (Miracle), Bill Richardson (W.N. Richardson Co. - Formerly E.E.C.) and Tony Firshman (T.F. Services). There is also a possibility that Freddy Vaccha and Dilwyn Jones might be there, also.

Our own Bill Cable will be demonstrating his new QLerk program which, we have been informed, has been completed after many moons of development. Congratulations, Bill!

According to Bob Dyl, QLers will be coming from all over the U.S. and Canada. Frank Davis and Paul Holmgren (Mechanical Affinity & Update magazine) will be there as well as people from C.A.T.S., Toronto Users Group and many independant QL users from distant points.

Among many demonstrations, we will be seeing Falkenburg hardware, Minerva, Hermes, I2C interface, spare QL parts, QXL (Miracle's new PC card), all other Miracle products and who knows what else?

Pre-registration cost is $3.00 sent to SeaCoast Services, 15 Kilburn Court, Newport, RI 02840. Registration at the door is $5.00.

After the meeting, Bob Dyl has advised that anyone who wants can come along to a local restaurant for a Dutch Treat supper with the group.

For those that might want to stay over, here are three nearby motels, all located in Middletown, a short distance away :

Royal Plaza Motel of Newport - 800/825-7072
Howard Johnson Motor Lodge - 401/849-2000
Econolodge - 800/537-7704

If you have any further questions, I would suggest you contact Bob Dyl at SeaCoast Services (address above) or phone him at 401/849-3805.

Looking forward to seeing you all there!

Sherm Waterman

PIXIES *** PIXILATED *** PIXELS

One time I thought that a pixel was so-called because it flitted about the screen like a pixie. You know what they are. They are like the characters in IOLANTHE that flit and flutter through the trees, or the little green men from Ireland that are very difficult to catch. What is it they call them? Leprechauns? They are also very very charming. They can do such wonderful things! Even more than a QL. Leprechauns even have a cache! I have heard they have it stored at the end of the rainbow believe it or not.

Because of the above I thought that was why we computerists always seemed to be pixilated. You kmow what I mean possessed, bedevilled, devilridden, a little bit mad etc.. All those words I picked up from the thesaurus. I thought that was the excuse. And that my wife would accept it.

But I have just found out that the word pixel came about because the picture on the screen is made up of PICTURE ELEMENTS, hence the word PIXEL. Get it? PIC.... EL....., or pic el, or pixel. Woe is me!!

How droll. (troll) And here I was all the time thinking I was just plain nuts.

HHH 930126